



**U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement**

May 4, 2006

News Release

ICE enforcing US-VISIT Exit Procedures in Puerto Rico

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico – U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) this week began verifying the compliance of foreign visitors with US-VISIT exit procedures when departing the United States from the Luis Muñoz Marín International Airport in San Juan. All foreign visitors are required to check out at US-VISIT exit kiosks when departing that airport. This is an effort to enforce the mandatory initiative and increase the compliance rate of the program locally.

“We want to ensure that foreign visitors who are required to record their departure from the United States using the US-VISIT do so,” said Lydia St. John-Mellado, acting special agent in charge of ICE’s Office of Investigations in Puerto Rico. “Our goal is to educate the public about the importance of complying with US-VISIT exit procedures and the consequences of not doing so or fraudulently recording an exit.”

Launched on Jan. 5, 2005, US-VISIT is part of a continuum of biometrically-enhanced security measures that begins outside the U.S. borders, at U.S. Consulates across the world, and continues through a visitor’s arrival in and departure from the United States. It uses scanning equipment to collect “biometric identifiers,” such as fingerprints, in an inkless process, along with a digital photograph of the visitor. Together with the standard information gathered from a visitor about their identity and travel, the program verifies the visitor’s identity and compliance with visa and immigration policies.

In addition to the Luis Muñoz Marín International Airport, US-VISIT exit procedures are in place at 12 airports and two seaports. Where these procedures are not available, visitors need to turn in the Form I-94 (Arrival and Departure Record) to the airline ticket agent when departing the United States. Failure to check out from US-VISIT, at airports and seaports where exit procedures are in place, could affect a visitor’s ability to re-enter the country.

At airports such as the Luis Muñoz Marín International Airport, visitors must check out through US-VISIT kiosks by following procedures similar to the entry process. They scan their visa or passport and their two index fingers and have a digital photo taken. Visitors receive a receipt that verifies they have checked out. Additionally, as with entry, the exit confirmation will be added to the visitor’s travel record to demonstrate compliance.

All data obtained from the visitor is securely stored as part of the visitor's travel records. This information is made available only to authorized officials and law enforcement agencies responsible for ensuring the safety and security of U.S. citizens and foreign visitors.

This enforcement action is part of the Secure Border Initiative (SBI), a comprehensive multi-year plan launched by the Department of Homeland Security to secure America's borders and reduce illegal migration. Under SBI, Homeland Security seeks to gain operational control of both the northern and southern borders, while re-engineering the detention and removal system to ensure that illegal aliens are removed from the country quickly and efficiently. SBI also involves strong interior enforcement efforts, including enhanced worksite enforcement investigations and intensified efforts to track down and remove illegal aliens inside this country.

ICE

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of four integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.